

A TUMOUR (IN ENGLISH)

Align towards the spine

[...]

Then he says, 'Reading this text will conjure a tumour up inside you. It will materialize in your colon (or perhaps your wet brain, or your left kidney, or tucked and beneath your right testicle, clustering inside your ovaries, your pituitary, your breast, etc. (his parenthetical tone as if suppressing a burp)), and it will, um, do so as a direct result of your having read this.'

Adding: 'The dimensions of the tumour will be exactly proportional to the amount of the text that you read. A microscopic kernel of tumourous tissue has already shuddered into being cos you've stubbornly read this far. Every word, every letter, swells the tumour. According to the size, shape and etymology of the word, not to mention the role within the structure of the surrounding sentence, paragraph. Typographic affectation will also EFFECT the proliferation of the tumour, as will the injudicious use of punctuation and that peculiar syntax of the infirm that threatens to collapse into gratuity and morbid self-pity at any moment. As in: infirm syntax, POORLY grammar.'

After a pregnant pause, he solemnly intones:
‘There is no undoing this process;
you cannot unread these words.’

Finally, and not without a certain tone of
provocation: ‘You can, however, simply stop
reading and arrest its development.’
At this he snorts, and the recording is over-
whelmed by pink, fleshy noise (a sine curve
as a sine wave as a fat palm smearing).

He was, of course,	referring to this text.
The one HERE,	puny in your
hands, ever so	unassuming
(your stupid	assumptions).
Reading it	will summon a
tumour to the	slick walls of
your innards,	spawning there
with no more	goading than
the reading of	a sequence of
specific and insist-	ent words. Their
insistence is beyond question: they will summon a	
tumour. There is nothing equivocal here; success – not	
necessarily your conception of success – is assured.	

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A bare bulb hanging from an olive-green strand of
nerve. A nerve ending as fibre-optic light source,
only more frail. A BUTTER GLOW smeared
over the upper aspect of the tumour, oozing down
its pulsating flank, pooling in those grey-pink folds
at its base. Light is hard to come by down here.

Turned somehow, as if on a lathe or a potter's wheel.
Disturbingly regular vertical rivulets score its
surface, becoming closer together at the perceived
apex of the tumour. These look sore, AN-
GERED (pink trimmed, grading to a deep
ruby at depth); a permanent puckering achieved
through that perpetual submersion in methanol.
As differentiated from your cooling bath water.

Perhaps it appears larger than it really is due to the
optical distortion of the thick glass of the apothecary
jar (long-sighted), or the still preserving
fluid it's suspended in (a certain gigan-
tism observed [...] metres down,
on the cusp of where the sun's
light peters out: a refraction to
excuse a vast Cthulu drifting
past with a wash of low brass to
pronounce its name
(your meagre head-torch
eventually find- ing the huge
crockery eye that, in the instant, gaze met, cleaves
you in two)). Or it's in fact *larger* than it appears to
be, and the complex sequence of lenses and mir-
rors you arranged for the express purpose is
WELL OFF.

Look, I'm not the best person to ask, but you could
look it up online. There'll surely be a
forum devoted to it.

There's still time.

Freckles, too. Freckled with both rabid

foam and liver spots. Stubble, too.
 In the summer, these markings increase relative to
 the sun's stature. Despite the tumour being buried
 in the meaty darkness (take every opportunity to
 imaginatively apprehend your INSIDES, Kiril).
 The tumour is effected by the movements of the
 heavens in various ways. – For instance, the
 moon's waxing and waning produces a horrif-
 ic pullulating of black gunk from what I thought
 was stubble but is in fact a network of gaping
 pores. It sweats according to the lunar cycle.

Uniquely, the occa-	sional fascination of
Saturn appears to	induce a certain
bioluminescence	in the tumour.
This can be per-	ceived ever so
faintly through	the fat, muscle
and skin – and	the summer-tog
duvet – that	entombs the
bastard thing.	

(Sitting upright in bed, staring
 bewildered at your PLUMP
 torso, which hums with a halogen heat and the
 illy fluorescence of a Timex wristwatch.)

1,216 billion kilometres away, Saturn screams
 a ridiculous question to the black.

A man-eater is most likely
 to fulfil its name when the moon is on the wane.
 Statistically speaking.

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Like the inscrutable face of a vinyl record, bought without inspection from a charity shop: Bobby Vinton sounding profoundly, prelingually deaf, his accompanying band made up of death-rattling lungs slumped gross all over the bandstand, his voice an unintelligible burble of senile regrets (Dolly? [...] *Dolly?*)

A glass marble, retrieved from a SCROTAL NET SACK (caul, offal), shot through with a beautiful tumbling horizon of reds, greens. This then slotted into the flapping socket to affect the rosier outlook (fucking close the OTHER EYE). Chin up, matey.

(The stubborn	Brazil
nut, refusing to	yield
entire, shat-	ters DULLY,
insisting upon	the
employment of	your lower
incisors to re-	trieve a vestige
of what should have	been – <i>could have</i>

been – glorious, complete Brazil nut. Next, the walnut, halved, conjures the thought of a laboratory mouse's exposed brain, opened to the probing electrodes of a demented Harry Harlow acolyte. SHRIVELLED. A lunatic twitch on the mouse's face when the brain gets poked with the dental instrument. Or a cocktail stick. The experiment justified as revealing conclusive proof that a walnut, half opened, is a pretty good representation of a mouse's brain. This does not, um, wash.)

The solitary eye of Polyphemus, rendered in black-figure. Elsewhere in the blockbusting show, the same eye found, blinded. Incredible detail in its ruin!,

you remark. (Occasionally, the three-disk multi-changer midi hi-fi (Aiwa) would swallow a CD and you'd have to take it to the hardware shop to have it retrieved by means of invasive surgery. Tom Zé's 'Estudando O Sambo' was TAKEN more than once. When returned, disgorged, you could have SWORN there was an extra instrument playing at the hellish climax of 'Má'; an extra filter applied to the miasma, one that revealed that the thing was actually alive and ALIVE with crawling, treacly movement. Or something subliminal, backwards, etc.))

MISERY GUTS!

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Would you	mind checking
the mole on	my shoulder?
It feels different	today, somehow.
Shifted, in some	way... I don't
know – would you	just take a look? The

shoulder feels frozen, unknown. It's not mine, that's for sure. It feels tectonic. The blade beneath, I mean. It feels like a shard of Easter egg. (Subterranean movement of plates only registered on the surface through the tiniest change in that raised brown mole: a congealed excrescence where the loamy juices beneath the crust of the crust have bubbled up through a miniscule shaft: bone marrow, browned in the air, scabbed, but still soft, pliable, its morphology precisely the same as my leg which, ever since the tumour spread to the spine, has refused to obey the proper etiquette I fling down from my brain. Kicking passing orderlies, shrugging the doctor off the edge of my bed when he perches

there to pronounce another plummet in my condition.
 I peel back the wet covers and study its terrible condition: as if that of a bog-person: a cold-case dredged from the depths of a peat bog somewhere in northern Europe, every limb preserved perfectly. But of course, NOT. Everything crushed, curled, browned in the preserving juices of the peat, made material. Cham-
 ois leather springs to mind. Certainly not flesh. And upon proper investigation it quickly becomes apparent that what was presumed to be a recent death (that the leg had recently changed under the duress of the encroaching tumour) is actually an ancient incident; this peat-logged stretch of sinew was committed to the earth THOU- SANDS OF YEARS AGO. – That it was the victim of some terrible rite, pegged at each extremity to the earth with briar stakes and ropes of hair, left to the whim of the earth, to starve under the grey, standby-sky – under the twenty-mile-wide eye of the goddess of the sky. Over the days that it takes to die, rain provides some satiation but also prolongs the agony – it takes up sucking the peat-gravy from the earth that, in turn, sucks and licks at the skin (fingertips puckering, not from the blissful bath water; fingernails working themselves free (their housing, come to think of it, NOT UP TO THE TASK)), transforming it into a barely living homunculus. Then finally it succumbs, and the earth swallows it whole – but holds it in its mouth like a mint or a thermometer or a slug of mouthwash. [...] Countless years later, my leg lies in the bed, attached to my hip bone (the pelvic girdle – to

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the lumbar vertebrae, to the thoracic vertebrae,
to the cervical vertebrae, to the simple skull.
Something like that, a wreck surrounded by wads
of wet soil and a scattering of brown pine-
needles (thrusting your head deep into the mountain of
pine-needles assembled by a hoard of oversized black
ants, awaiting some sort of epiphany. After a moment,
plucking up the courage, you open your eyes.)

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– Check the fucking mole, PLEASE!

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A kind of ar-	chitectural folly
at night, the	security lights
– hundreds of	them – flicking
ON as you ap-	proach through
the tall, wet grass.	A stadium's
worth. Instinctively	you fling yourself to
the ground and crawl the rest of the way on your stom-	
ach, pulling yourself forwards on your elbows (your	
legs dragging useless behind you ('Christina's World'))	
and you're quickly drenched. As you approach you	
can see that the folly apes the shape of your tumour.	

The facade rendered in an expensive-
looking veneer: a pink, marbled veneer
inspired – it says in the brochure – 'by that
unique scrotal surface of the tumour'.

It seems the folly squats in a slight culvert of the
grounds and is shaded by the splayed limbs of a line of

oak trees. It's muggy out tonight. You creep down the decline approaching the folly and pause on the edge of the grass – on the threshold of some tacky decking that's incongruous to the rest of the design. Perhaps added by the estate agents in an attempt to expand a demographic, to downplay the more *recherché* aspects of the folly. You wait, breathing heavily, and the security lights go off and you're plunged back into the black. The folly now perceptible only as black mirror on black ground appealing not to the eyes but to that edgeless ache that radiates out from the tumourous core of your body. A kind of echo-location that reports the folly as either microscopic, or roughly the size of a garage. You can't help let out a yelp that, though immediately stifled by the hot night, sets a dog barking somewhere and, after a dreadful moment, a light to appear in a previously unnoticed window on what must be the first floor of the folly. Net curtains obscure the detail within, though a figure is discernible in silhouette, sitting up with stop motion immediacy – rearing up as if from a nightmare. Like a felled tree in VHS reverse. Something about its shape – sloping shoulders and bulging head, flimsy, oddly-jointed arms, what appears to be a mouth, gaping – something about its movements – panicky, maybe – turns your stomach. Anyway, it's GOTTEN up now, staggering somewhere – presumably to see to the dog. You can hear it, the figure, whispering, mumbling, perhaps to itself, perhaps to the STUDIO AUDIENCE. And then another YELP in the darkness, and it's your own

yelp, impersonated, parodied, sarcastic from the voice
 inside the folly, from the figure. Dragging, arrhythmic
 footsteps FOLEYED to excessive perfection. And you
 lie as flat as you can, eyes wide to the darkness (you
 very quietly comprehend an infinitesimal
 version of this scene being played out inside your
 body). The door to the folly – white, double-glazed,
 hushed – opens. And there it is: huge, wet. A brown
 towel around its midriff, hair all over, a smile, wet eyes,
 genitals visible from your prone position – breathing
 audibly, with a slight whistle to it, a labour. Surveying
 from the doorsill, the security lights ON
 again – and you're surely plain as day
 now, lying there, wet, crippled,
 clutching the brochure –
 pathetic cunt – and sure
 enough the figure looks
 down at you and smiles. Its
 fat, overly haired head cocked
 like a fucking animal. And it
 waits patiently for an explanation,
 though it knows perfectly well what has happened, why
 you're here. So you say, YOUR VOICE CRAZING,
 'Do you live here?'.

And it turns, unblinking, smile unwavering, away
 from you, and goes back inside. You stand up and
 follow it in, closing the door quietly behind you.
 And you know how to lock it because you have a
 door like this at home. Not at your home, but at
 your parent's home-your home – by lifting the han-
 dle back on itself, & THEN turning the key.

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Propping the tumour against the door frame, you mark a notch at its highest point with a chef's knife what was to hand. The tumour moves away and turns to admire just how much it's grown since the last mark. Alongside these increments, another, unknown progression is charted, this time in black marker pen on the white gloss of the door frame. According to the dates (hundreds of them) this set traces the *sbrinking* of something over the course of roughly sixty years. Towards the bottom, the markings are fainter, the pen running low.

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Massaging cocoa
a good wash.

butter into it after

/

A comput-
sphere, skinned
with a bump-map
er-generated
in pale tones,
that emulates the
scales of a fish. The polygon count is tremendously
high – consequently the frame rate as it rotates there
is – at least on your ancient computer is pathetic.
Juddering & skittering on its axis. You decide that the
best accompaniment to this would be Sun City Girls'
'Lies Up The Niger', maybe solely cos it's playing

AT THE MOMENT

and at any given moment 'Lies Up The
Niger' will be playing somewhere in the world),
but it also seems to arrest something of
the failing movements of the sphere.
And so you add a grotesque, green lens flare. And
the grinding sound of rock on rock. And a subtitle in

italicized Helvetica Neue that describes, in half-baked sentences, an historical exhibition of fetishes and reliquaries from antiquity to now – ending with the proclamation that this sphere is the patron saint of last words. – Or of people right there on the cusp of death who decide to turn to faith at the last minute. Or of those who turn into corpses before their turn.

– The patron saint of comatose children, of Alzheimer's patients, of people buried beneath the rubble, resigned to death, surrounded by those already dead. The music segues seamlessly into 'Computer Forms' by The Shadow Ring. Glockenspiel and aggressively out-of-tune guitar – a voice asking, 'What will they write about when all the buttons have been pressed?...' and you answer, in your bedroom, aimed at the back of the head of your sleeping partner, in a whisper:

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(Those desperate hours (though they may only be one or half or just a few elongated minutes) in the abyssal stretches of the night, lying there, racing over and over the same worried groundlessness in your head – a sightless, senseless probing of your fears, ailments, aspirations, forgotten errands (years ago or hence), lost purposes – all lashed together into a huge fuck-off ball you struggle within AND IN your arms like a bald cuckoo you're forced to parent. 'What will I [...]?', you mouth to the ceiling. 'How will I ever [...]?', you think, tracing over and over the idea of a face in the

pattern on the curtain. Another in the artex'd wall.
There's nothing for it, no solution to be found to your
endless problems. And beside you, sleeping soundly,
your partner is elsewhere – they cannot comfort you.
In the morning you'll have to leave, you'll have to
abandon this life. It was never going to work. Idiot.
– You return to the bundle of insolubles,
converging now into one huouge fleshy orb,
and you decide to SWALLOW IT, tears well-
ing AND UP, and you feel it move slowly,
with difficulty, down the alimentary canal).

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If it's like this
we'll go to
Of course, in
it's like this.

in the morning,
the doctor.
the morning,

/

(In terms of surrogates, the durian fruit looms as
the paragon. But in this instance and at this stage
a satsuma or a clementine (whichever is tarter) is
probably more apposite. Something about the tex-
ture as analogue for some rather graphic skin condi-
tion, tempered by the alien colour – a colour seldom
found in the body but one that, when thrust into the
imaginative context, might imply some particular-
ly effusive relations: iodine & mould, for example.
The lurid orange lichen sharp-popping on the side
of the headstone.) A podgy, jolly little sphere. ()

[...] in the middle of the South Pacific Ocean, a

thousand feet below the surface, what is believed to be an alien spacecraft is discovered after a ship laying transoceanic cable has its cable cut and the United States Navy investigates the cause. The thickness of coral growth on the spaceship suggests that it has been there for almost 300 years or THEREABOUTS. A team made up of marine biologist Dr. Beth Halperin (Sharon Stone), mathematician Dr. Harry Adams (Samuel L. Jackson), astrophysicist Dr. Ted Fielding (Liev Schreiber), psychologist Dr. Norman Goodman (Dustin Hoffman), and a member of the US Navy (Peter Coyote) are tasked with investigating the spaceship. The team (along with two navy technicians) are housed in a state-of-the-art underwater environment called The Habitat during their stay on the ocean floor. Upon entering the spaceship, the team makes several discoveries. The first is that the ship is not alien, and that it is in fact an American spaceship. They assume, due to the years of coral growth and the sufficiently advanced technology, that the ship is from the future. The last date in the ship's log, 06/21/43 (21/06/43), does not indicate the specific century (!!). The last entry in the log details an 'Unknown (Entry) Event', which depicts the ship apparently falling into a black hole, resulting in its trip through time. The ship's mission involved gathering objects from around the galaxy to bring back to Earth. An item of particular interest is a large, perfect sphere in the cargo hold. It is suspended a few feet above the ground and has an impenetrable fluid

surface which reflects its surroundings but not people.

Harry concludes from the classification of the event which sent the ship back that The Habitat crew is fated to die: it would not have been an 'unknown event' if they had lived to report about it, he reasons. Harry soon sneaks back to the spaceship, and finds a way to enter the sphere. Soon after, a series of numeric encoded messages begins to show up on the habitat's computer screens, and Harry and Ted are able to decipher the messages and converse with what appears to be an alien (which calls itself 'Jerry'), which has been trapped in the sphere. They soon discover that 'Jerry' can hear everything they are saying aboard The Habitat. Harry's entry into the sphere prevents the team from evacuating before the arrival of a powerful typhoon on the surface, forcing them to stay below for almost a week. A series of tragedies then befalls the crew: Fletcher, the navy technician, is killed by some aggressive Sea Nettles, whatever the hell they are; a giant squid (crockery eye) attacks and damages the station, killing Edmunds by completely pulverizing her body, Ted by blasting him with a large fire blast, and Barnes by slicing him in half with a computer-operated door in the ensuing chaos; and sea snakes attack Norman. Jerry is the cause of these incidents.

Eventually, only Harry, Norman and Beth remain. At this point, they realize that they have all entered the world of the perfect sphere, which has given them the

power to manifest their thoughts into reality. As such, all of the disasters that had been plaguing them are the result of manifestations of the worst parts of their own minds. The name 'Jerry' turns out to have been erroneously decoded and is actually spelled 'Harry'; it is Harry's subconscious communicating with them through their computer system whenever he is asleep. At that point, Beth's suicidal thoughts manifest themselves as triggering a countdown to detonate the explosives that were brought along to clear away the coral. They abandon The Habitat for the mini-sub, but their fears manifest an illusion of the space-craft around them. Norman finally sees through the illusion, and punches the mini-sub's emergency surfacing button. The explosives destroy The Habitat and the spaceship, but (unknown to them) the sphere itself remains undamaged. As the explosives detonate and create a huge blast wave below it, the mini-sub rises to the surface, to be quickly retrieved by the returning surface ships, permitting the survivors to begin safe decompression once on board a navy ship.

The film ends with the three deciding to use their powers to erase their own memories before being debriefed, in order to prevent the knowledge about the sphere from falling into the wrong hands. Thus, Harry's paradox, in which they are alive yet no one has learned about the 'unknown event', is resolved. As they erase their own memories of the 'unknown event', the sphere is seen emerging

from the ocean and flying off into space... * ETC.

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Then we watched *Westworld* – another Michael Crichton movie adaptation. He might have even directed this one. It's much better. Brutal and certainly less intellectually pretentious. There's no attempt to explain the intricacies of the robot cowboys, knights and Romans that wander about the three themed Worlds for the titillation of the human guests. At this time, technology is sufficiently advanced for this sort of shit to go on, that's all. Of course – and this the same lesson provided in *Jurassic Park* – the robots go wrong, and the film swings into its moral, paranoiac finale. Best of all is Yul Brynner as a cowboy robot baddie, who plays the fall-guy robot for the wealthy tourist's sheriff fantasies – turning mass murderer and terrifying nemesis to the film's heroes when the robots malfunction.

Afterwards, we talk about his perfect bald head, so easily confused with a latex industrial product; his handsome, serious face moving with animatronic uncaring. Lifting his face off to fiddle with the thicket of wires and glowing LEDs behind it. Flinging a flask of hydrochloric or sulphuric acid at his face. Both these scenes remind us that this isn't Yul Brynner, but a robot; not a man but a machine. That we should never confuse the two. But you say you wouldn't mind that: being confused with a robot – or

rather, that you wouldn't mind confusing yourself
with a robot. That, seeing Yul's face melting off to
reveal that thicket of wires and glowing LEDs, made
you yearn to be some insensate robot capable of
functioning in spite of any wound, any infliction.

You're intimating your suffering.

Sitting through two Michael Crichton films – sitting
through any two films – was very, very difficult.
You were constantly swerving between diegetic
absorption and abject, pained reality
throughout. I didn't notice: I was
engrossed in the film. I drank my
way through a six-pack of
Kronenbourg. You drain a
whole bottle of Oramorph.
It's tricky, you say, because
apparently one builds up a
tolerance to the analgesic effects of
low-dose morphine pretty quickly. So
I need more and more to provide the same relief, you
say. It's particularly good for the relief of the growth
pressing HARD on my vertebrae; this fistful bastard
makes getting comfortable almost impossible, you say.

It's also difficult to watch anything particularly
emotionally manipulative. Any emotional wrench-
ing – regardless of how flagrantly sentimental or
gratuitous – is increasingly difficult to deal with.
I cry at the drop of a hat, you hold back. The same
goes for music: Bartók leaves me sobbing.
I wept uncontrollably listening to *West Side Story*.
Paralysed by *Suite bergamasque*, Baden Powell.

– And it's not cathartic, not at all. There is no solace in feeling these things – they are merely catalysts for my own self-pity, primed to drag me back to the despondent self-absorption of my fucking illness.

Sphere and *Westworld* both allegorized my condition, and sent me plummeting into a Pit of Despair, from which it will take me a good few hours and some consistent distraction to pull myself out OF FROM. Those few things I can bare are those things that neither offend nor inspire. Nor do anything, really. Soap operas are perfect, for example. Sport is perfect, for example. Fucking darts, or something. Snooker. *Ski* temporary children's book. A magazine about cars. Something flat but captivating. Absolutely smooth. Abso- lutely smooth. A massive sheet of stainless steel, heated by the sun to an agreeable temperature (spring sun. That forgotten sun returning after a lifetime of winter blacks, greys). You lie on it unselfconsciously, not caring who sees. Nature documentaries seem like a good idea, so long as you don't fall into that anthropomorphic trap and start romanticizing the plight of whatever baby whatever.

Whatever. Find that thing, and cling to it for dear life. Otherwise it's emotional immolation for you.

(At the end of *Westworld*, Yul Brynner's demented robot kills the protagonist, then turns to the camera and shoots a single round from the hip to turn the screen black. Sad Jimmy Bond. 'THE END' appears

widely TRACKED and in the centre, written in poorly animated, warmly graded blood (same blood drooled by the cartoon vampire that replaces the MGM lion at the beginning of *The Fearless Vampire Killers*). Set in Grotesque, BOLD and of blood. The theme tune – some unreleased Wolf Eyes track – careers in like a bad steel bull. Credits roll from top to bottom and are also set in Grotesque, but Light and coloured fluorescent pink on acid green. Strobing, perhaps.)

<p>(‘ETCETERA ET-Yul, on his own in set of <i>The King</i> blankly at the and deep-red fabulous, regal into one of mirrors, lined bulbs. He’s on steadily burning his right (left in the mirror), a glass of bourbon and slow-melting ice to his left (right). His head emanating a certain heat (a haze loitering as a halo).</p>	<p>CETERA’, sung by his trailer on the <i>and I</i>, staring golden brocade flocking of his coat – staring those make-up with spherical call. A cigarette up in the ashtray to his right (left in the mirror), a glass of bourbon and slow-melting ice to his left (right). His head emanating a certain heat (a haze loitering as a halo).</p>
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On closer inspection, beads of sweat prickling through the heavy, crude Asiatic makeup. A small patch of putty covering a particularly nautical vein that pumps fiercely on his left temple. Not a vein, but an untidy rise of blue cabling just beneath the latex skin. Blue cabling threading through what turns out to be – not a skeleton of bones, nor a metal armature, but a mahogany scaffold, Renaissance in its engineering, Baroque in its florid detail! Tiny pyrographic vine motifs enwrap

the wooden 'bones'. The skull, notably. At the crown, the vines converge around a panel that depicts, in something Runic, hieroglyphic (we can somehow read it, though), the growth of some thing – the swelling thingy eventually takes over a body, replacing whatever anima the body might have had with a kind of liquid-clay shadow that, for a while at least, functions, albeit at a very simplified level (eating, drinking, sleeping, fucking, shitting, etc.). Accordingly, it takes a while for the others to notice. Eventually, however, the fluidity of the surrogate begins to be stymied by state change into one extreme, and the other. These conspicuous in to the original – being, whatever-cuddle', is how put it. This tably, to the sad surrogate subject.

dry, cracked earth at
brown smoke at
states are more
their difference
the person, the
er. 'Harder to
the hieroglyphs
leading, inevi-
ostracizing of the

Stepping back, it's clear you've made a complete mess of Yul's head. Shit. Latex skin peeled back, split – hanging in obscene sheets down his back – parcels of cabling jutting stiff in every direction. And that beautiful mahogany edifice revealed shining with a beeswax lustre, the intricate designs of vines creeping up and about the wood in precise, burnt gullies. Not vines but briar, densely thorned, leading up to the cranium and the hieroglyphs whose object, it seems clear now, is that frightening deity of CGI'd fat and flesh – a capsule of pulverized flesh, worshipped or at least beatified. A future foodstuff, genetically engineered and grown

on the side of a fallen tree, accidentally discovered by
dog walkers some time in the twenty-
second century. Meat-spheres. One of which mu-
tates, gains the power of thought, rebels, enslaves,
becomes a god, devours and devours and devours
everything till there's no sustenance left. Etc.

– You go. I'll clear this ungodly mess up.)

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The tumour, span-	ning many acres now
– many leagues,	fathoms (lots of
archaic measure-	ments) – turns
over in its sleep.	Sweating. It
begins to snore	erratically, air
sucked in past	various puddles
of various sub-	stances of var-
ious viscosities,	at least one of
which rainbowed	and flammable
– gathered in those	rock pools at the

threshold of [...]. It's an unbearable sound – somewhere
between a landslide and a child grinding their scabby
milk teeth. Somewhere there's a mouth, webbed and
underdeveloped. Somewhere. Teeth as stalactites and
-mites at the mouth of a cave used exclusively for the
maturing of a provincial cheese that it's illegal to carry
on public transport. That, even in the region it hails
from, is considered an acquired taste, and is commonly
seen at open-air markets writhing with maggots whose
digestive secretions lend the cheese its peculiar charac-
ter. Tiny yellow smears of excrescence providing the
SINCERE tang, the reverie. It all proves too much
for us, and we sprint away from the *fromagerie* giggling

with the scandal. [...] Deeper inside the cave there's a dramatic diorama of skeleton Neanderthals surrounding, as if in a Nativity, a smaller skeleton, prone on a great slab of rock, with each encircling Neanderthal plunging a sharpened, now-petrified stick into what was presumably its abdomen. The scene comes alive in the flickering light of your flaming torch. [...] Deeper still is the epiglottis, flexing its cartilaginous wings to usher you deeper, downwards, through the brawny pothole. There are taste buds on the epiglottal wings, each one an eyeball that winces and weeps as you sweep your torch close.

(The dreams	of the tumour
are sluggish	things and
are generally	banal. Sartorial
error, embar-	rassment in
the workplace,	inappropriate
sexual fum-	blings with
half-forgotten	acquaintances,
etc. These vapid	revelations inevita-

bly disappoint. Though they do point out an opaque truth concerning the mundanity of this disease, the boredom of that possible death. And God! the fucking demands to undertake white-water rafting, ballooning, bungee jumping and the like – the demand for some pre-death disco – is a terrible, obliging myth started by a cabal of countercultural gurus turned Silicon Valley cunts. The coercion of positivity, the demand to BE BRAVE, BE HAPPY – to face death LIKE A MAN. 'Man up' and 'grow some balls'. You confess to feeling this duress. How on earth is one supposed to respond when the only thing that really, truly appeals in these final days is COPIOUS weeping,

funereal-fantasy and the next, ever-
heavier dose of drugs? This as you unwrap
another book about alternative medicine from a
friend who has absolutely no idea what to say to you.
They look at you from behind pea-souper eyes, head
cocked to one side, brow crumpled, a 'tut' coiled on
the tongue ready to be employed in disbelief and
agreement at some sad whatever from you. Yes,
you're implicit in this exchange – what else for it?)

(Save for tonight, perhaps. When you, up above, are	
out, alone, trawling	the local bars for
something – a	fight, perhaps.
Sex, maybe.	Probably neither.
Probably just an	affirmation of
disaffection, of	the romance of
your condition.	A performance
of melodramatic	proportions,
soundtracked in	a style after John
Barry's 'Mid-	night Cowboy'
theme (the romance	of prostitution).

And down below, in that gutted recess, the tumour
turns over and, in a parallel movement, enters another
dream-territory, via a previously unnoticed interior
screen door. Inside, the Staked Plains yawn smashed
teeth and a battle is pitched between an indigenous
horde and a uniformed wedge of cavalry. Gun smoke,
whistling arrows, harmonica. The tumour, in the guise
of a buffalo, picks its way through a carpet of corpses,
each more riddled with arrows, more unrecognizable
than the last. The tumour comes to a figure so
arrow-suffused as to have transformed and happy
into a hillock of spiny grass. Spiny grass daubed with
cuckoo spit. And the tumour starts to graze, forgetting

the battle, enjoying the peculiar sensations, getting a grip on the controls of this vehicle and its tastes. Suddenly the tumour feels a terrible pain sear down its spine and wheels round to discover a cavalry soldier standing over it, a long foil unsheathed and plunged deep into its back. The tumour collapses, paralysed (some vital nervous subsystem has been severed) and the soldier, smirking all the while, proceeds to skin the tumour alive, scraping fur back from raw muscle with remarkable proficiency. Within moments he whips the entire pelt from the trembling body with a flamboyant gesture.

a geodesic net of

He turns back

now exposed,

sets to dis-

it. Heaving

gash opened

genitals. A cold

it ALL out in

rest on THE DRY

He hangs this over

sticks to dry out.

to the tumour,

uncooked – and

embowelling

gore from a

from chin to

hand pulling

great fistfuls to

EARTH. The

SLAP! of a lung on THE DRY EARTH, etc. Each

organ, each unrecognizable form, will serve a purpose.

We understand. If not as foodstuff for the hungry party (loitering a ways off), then dried for aphrodisiacal use, or stretched into something like a hat or a condom. 'This thing (holding up a fistful of wet red) will be consumed by me at the height of a ritual. It will endow me with special powers [...]. This thing (a sheet of sagging caul, like brown, once-worked pizza dough, hung over two fists) will be draped over the lowest branch of the nearest pine tree, thereby appeasing the ire of that Peculiar Fleshy God. This stuff (a jet of milky-white liquid expressed from some pink hosing (a

wrench of pain)) will be heated up, mixed with some of the blood from your head. The mixture poured into a well-greased cake tin and baked.' All of it going to good use. Though at the moment, everything accruing in one huge slag-heap of bits and stuff beside the soldier. Finally finished, the soldier stands, exhausted and coated in blood, eyes and teeth obscenely white against red ground. The tumour feels DE-STRESSED.)

/

Waking with a start,	it takes the tumour a
moment to wriggle	free of the dream
and remember	where it is – what
it is, what's	possible, what
the END of all	this might be –
and to resume	its brooding,
SUB ROSA	(*). You crash
in through the	front door.

/

– You know what I mean. I mean: the tumour is growing at an exponential but forecast rate. AS IN, nothing unexpected has happened. To interrupt its enlargement, as in. AS IN, there's nothing to worry about. Save for the tumour, which may or may not be on the war path.

/

A cave again, this time somewhere in the Arctic circle. Or bored into the side of a ridge in the Himalayas. Or a mine in an abandoned colony on Neptune, a sign

hanging above the entrance, proclaiming something in
 some unknown pictographic language. A pall of Nep-
 tunian dust. Inside this cave it's unbelievably cold. And
 dark. The kind of darkness that threatens to gouge out
 your fucking eyes. The kind of darkness that submerges,
 strangles. There is a smell in here – something forsaken,
 aeons old, still clinging to the impervious walls. Walls
 like sheet-metal once used as a massive, geological
 griddle for the exclusive purpose of cooking buffalo
a la plancha. Or some sort of megafauna, awkwardly
 straddling those final, absurd dinosaurs and the modest
 mammals concurrent with us. The smell of these things
 cooking against these walls, and over the course of a
 million years or so – the heat supplied by the
 weltering blood of the continent – suddenly
 instantaneously soused by the appearance of a
 massive ocean FLOORED with vents and
 infested with coral lacanths. Then all of this ICED.
 (Seen in bored time-lapse with sweeping soundtrack) [...].
 Towards the back of the cave, the smell intensifies then
 swerves into something faecal. (You can feel the darkness
 on your outstretched hands – the shitty stench under your
 fingernails; the cold, of course, is IN YOUR BONES.)
 (The acoustic is worth mentioning here. Reverberating
 footsteps describe something like a tunnel, the walls
 either side are surely close – just beyond your flailing
 fingertips, though the entrance behind you and the
 whatever before are both uncertain. The peculiarities of
 the echo in here. You blurt out a couple of incoherent
 yelps, then a yell that's threatening enough to shock
 you. Then a weirder noise, something

unpredicted. As in, you didn't know what you were going to say until you said it. The name 'Greg'. ETC.

Each of these utterances echoes in such a way as to imply a third aspect, something between your voice and the cavernous echo. You describe it later, in the interview, as like double-tracking on your voice, like a chorus addressing the audience with dramatic irony (the audience skulking silently in the darkness, ahead or behind. Probably behind) – relating a truth

CONCERNING you but UNBEKNOWNST to you. This chorus gazes out through your functionless eyes, uses your	mouth to communicate – embedding
slight trough	between voice
and echo. This	cave, you think,
is a theatre.	But I'm not
an actor, you	think. At least,
not in a traditional	sense.
I do <i>suspect</i> I'm	an actor. You
whisper some-	thing, apparently
under your breath.	Something some-

thing something. You picture your breath before you, hanging in the air, perhaps drifting over the surface of an audience member silently pacing backwards, inches from your face, not breathing, not making a sound, just observing you – all-pupil, all-black eyeballs swivelling maniacally in ample sockets. Only it's too dark to make any of this out. Still, in absence of any confirmatory sensation, this is all certainly true. Finally, with a sharp inhalation, your loving hands find something: a surface, maybe the back wall of the cave. Simultaneously, the acoustic changes to something closer. The deadened air of a summer path somewhere at around about sea-level. And underfoot it feels like moss. Or maybe

industrial foam. The SURFACE beneath your hands is
 something else, something wet. Some of that slime that
 musters orange on the side of an autumn tree, perhaps.
 Clammy. Like the way one might imagine the hands of
 the week-long dead. The underside of a banana slug.
 The snout of some big game. Some excrescence to be
 dealt with in the preparation of some exotic foodstuff.
 The combined foreheads of an entire residential home
 on the brink of closure, bowing to the pressures of
 a suspicious inquiry. The thickened space between.
 Unimaginable on Neptune or any of its moons. It's an
 internal texture, a non-surface not meant
 to be touched; it is a non-surface,
 absolutely indescribable
 because – under any other
 circumstances bar invasive
 surgery – it would not be
 exposed to any kind
 of NERVOUS APPREHEN-
 SION. So it smells of nothing,
 looks like nothing, feels like nothing,
 sounds like NOTHING. Only here, at the
 back of this frozen cave, the surface springs into
 vivid, terrible being at the first touch of your
 trembling fingers. Every sense is arrested simultane-
 ously, bombarded with EXTREME PREJUDICE:
 a great rent in the PRECIOUS silence of the cave. A
 glissando of atonal percussion founded upon a
 shifting clay bed of sub-bass; a thick seam of brass
 pumping vast swathes of ridiculously oiled muscle,
 torn, sprained, PULLED into taut potentials, suspend-
 ed, irresolute chords spinning the treble and carving
 a fresh tunnel down and to the left of your ear drum,
 circumventing those flimsy bones, those trilobite

coils of cartilage, skipping the need for the hairs,
 twinned with the cilla that wigs your lungs, that waft
 to the movement of the air that etc. etc. None of that.
 A brutal hole gouged out of your inner ear, leading
 straight to that dank region of the brain, seldom used,
 that can be purposed kinetically. A Harry Partch
 instrument, unrealized. – A Polyphonic Microtonal
 Spirit Organ (PMSO). This sound is not sound.
 – A stink, then, ushered in by the KETTLE DRUMS,
 crashes against your nose, struggling upwards, into
 your flaring nostrils, and, impatient, permeating your
 skull, and head- ing deep into those
 dangerous WET- LANDS of the
 brain. Fluores- cent yellow putty
 ROUNDING OFF all those
 annoying vortices. And
 it's something like SAGE,
 only intensified a hundredfold;
 lined, beautiful- ly, with a shine
 of slurry. Gan- grenous tissue
 & BRASS – the metallics of blood,
 frankfurters – an illicit KISS of acidic, chapped,
 sphinctal, corky LIPS. Hills as far as the eye can see,
 each one composed of raw sewage with a propensity
 for lilac, perfumed toilet roll; a swatch of magazine
 perfume smeared with a CRINKLE (expressed on the
 piccolo) over a sea of bald, sweating heads; greasepaint,
 daubed over a dense wall of UNKEMPT GENITALS
 [...] All of this collapsing, inevitably, into taste in the
 mouth, and gagging, retching, vomiting, over and
 over. (The honesty afforded! The thrill of it all!) (Piss
 sloshing in slo-mo waves, foaming at the crests, bluing,
 mingling with extra-thick Domestos; rafts, dinghies,
 plastic kayaks disguised as rim blocks and toilet

mints, cast about, crewed by lepers, lizards in cute
naval rig, fat naked apes, your unfazed mother, etc.))

(When a boy or girl grows up to sufficient size or
age (fat, adolescent), a *Pa-lo-tle-ton* is set apart for his
or her EXCLUSIVE use. This thing right here is a
buffalo robe, neatly dressed, made of a full skin, with
the head fastened by the LIPS to the heads of their
lounge-like, willow beds. The *On-ta-koi* is the ordinary
robe for the bed. It is only a half robe, mind, and cut
off at the neck ALSO. The hide of the *Pa-lo-tle-ton* is
carefully taken off, with all the skill of
the taxidermist, so as to preserve
its full covering of the head, with
even the horns and eyes and
EARS AND LIPS, and also
the legs down to the hoofs,
and sometimes even the hoofs
are retained – even, perhaps,
sods of drying earth as wedges
protruding from the base of the
hooves – even, occasionally, the skeleton of some
Neanderthal foetus, dangling limp from that stiletto of
earth. Beneath that, newspaper spread out (the sports
section) to catch the clods of mud satisfyingly freed
from between the underdeveloped toe-bones with a
butter knife. This is the way it goes. Tough shit.)

/

It is a well observed fact that, when provided with an
appropriate amount of terracotta clay (as opposed to
that grey, Comprehensive School stuff), elderly
outpatients in particular will more often than not roll

a near-as-damn-it sphere between their two dorsal palms. This, however, is a fleeting form: almost immediately – after a couple of ponderous moments holding the spheroid aloft between forefinger and thumb (and perhaps a couple more moments observing the Celtic dying of the other hand's palm with terracotta blush) – the sphere will be squashed into a disk, the disk then rolled into an extruded spiral, the extruded spiral then homogenized, SUBSIDED into a cylinder. A few moments attempting to flatten the ends, then the clay is discarded. (We found one of these on the bedside table which happened to be weighing horrible-heavy on the manuscript they'd been desperately trying to finish before the end. You got bored reading it, perched on the edge of the bed, and, against the assumed proprietary etiquette of the mourning, declared it insipid (!), derivative (!), tepid (!), and promptly burnt it in the incinerator in the back garden, along with a mountain of exercise books we'd claimed from the skip a month before. A month ago, we wanted to keep everything. This month, October, is a more realistic month. We have no room and we and our current shit must take precedence. A-men! you cry, jostling a gardening cane in the blazing incinerator, sending a particle effect of embers and ash up into the TWILIGHT. Again, you've managed to polish off a whole plastic bottle of Oramorph, while I, unimpeded (*well*, to the best of my knowledge) only had a couple of glasses of red. Incidentally, it's the red you brought home the other month (that same month that feels so, so long ago – that month of resolutions

and potentials and sex) from the posh shop. NOT the usual cheap shit. Now stood on the counter top in the kitchen with one of those rubber stoppers in it. Not the cork, that was decimated in the opening.

/

You're still not really eating. You can taste nothing, apparently. Which I find hard to STOMACH, considering the effort I put into the meals, night after night. A protest, of sorts – though you could easily call it denial. I like to think (not 'like': again, a lie) that it's the tumour's taste. That the tumour is the one with the ashen palette, the overly sweet tooth. Sugar sprinkled liberally over Original Alpen! A WHAM! bar, etc. The juvenile desires of that cellular rapist that is, at this moment, the size of a golf ball or a gobstopper. I fucking hate golf, you say, and we share a smile. The camera plummets in, past the smile, down through the red labyrinth and slows to a stop before the altered tumour – a false idol to that fleshy god, always-already rendered in the latest HD technology – an Nvidia graphics card with some unholy amount of memory, running on a quadruple, quad-core thing with two massive monitors – one for editing on (vivisection), the other for viewing the rendered footage. The rendering on the hair of the GOD: moving in treacly gusts, slow, as if held underwater, snagged in the hatch of the bathysphere by the sleeve of the bathrobe it went in wearing; wet-look, clumped together in attractive, sinuous ridges, the way

you wish you could get it. Perfect drift: a lunar tide,
 sucking the hair eternally. Perhaps even a few fizzing
 bubbles added – an excess of demonstrational effect –
 to CONVINCE. On the surface, the lens of the cam-
 era BOBS, the upper half of the image relatively clear,
 though flecked, again, in an effort to convince, with
 droplets that act as prisms to the image), while the lower
 magnifies: Bifocals, then, worn by someone clearly in
 need of something more variable, less harshly deline-
 ated. Certainly a relative of ours. Mitochondrial. And
 in the distance – seen in the upper, above-water half – a
 dramatic shoreline: the shoreline of a
 fictional island – a Skull Island,
 if you will – that forbodes,
 presents a front of jagged cliffs,
 screeching seabirds, a
 crest of jungle visible beyond
 all that – a cave, its mouth
 a retarded gape – swilling brine
 like mouthwash or drool over
 KEEN, sharded rocks. An ominous
 tone from the soundtrack. Still, you decide to strike
 out; front crawl, towards what looks like CERTAIN
 DEATH. Fool! – You can barely swim! (The cam-
 era shoots upwards to take in the whole scene – your
 pathetic figure receding against a swollen, dark blue
 ground – then the island whole, as we pass through a
 winding sheet of cumulus cloud – a vast, protruding
 geometry is revealed, to the shrill, discordant strains
 of a string section, as to be a perfect metaphor for your,
 um, tumour. A lay estimate might put it at four or five
 miles across. Your SCULLING figure is now invis-
 ible and the scale of the shot starts to buckle under the
 considerable weight of the analogy, the sea resembling

some sort of amniotic fluid (maybe, as movement is
 less apparent from this GOD's eye vantage, agar jelly)
 a mongrel iris surrounding the tumour-island, pro-
 truding sore and alien and thrumming in the midst of
 such uniformity. A shark's fin in its emotional affect.
 This coming as something of a shock. Importantly, this
 predictability does *not* diminish the effect. We both
 cry. We hold one another. Later, I admit [...] the geology
 of the tumour seems to confound human physiology.
 As in, geology does not belong inside your black-red
 innards. A stone. Only it looks man-made, like a mus-
 ket ball or something fucking else. Different
 to those stones that accrue as a
 result of stress or your diet
 of cigarettes, vodka. Though
 of course, it's precisely that,
 all of that, catalysed by
 this text. Gall stones, kidney
 stones, oto- liths, teratoma,
 etc. It's crucial we RECTIFY
 any confusion in this matter: the
 conjuration that this text performs – is performing
 right now – is reliant upon the context it finds itself
 in – within – inside your would-be steaming guts.)

/

As previously discussed elsewhere, a model
 of the process might be like:

Words – a word – for example, 'GRISTLE' (though
 sentencing, paragraphing, type, kern, track, etc. is criti-
 cal. And those parenthetical inverted commas are a ter-
 rible concession) – seeps in through your bovine eyes.

This much so familiar. So at this point, the word's state is closest to gas. Though it's very much really not at all in any way gas. The gas of a Gas Giant – impossible to comprehend, though apparently scientifically verifiable (the science, blah blah, eludes yours and my slow wits).

Imagine GRISTLE whistling in through your pupils: tiny jets of GRISTLE through your pupils. Tiny jets rushing in through your massively dilated pupils – the pupils of a HOP HEAD. This gas is visible, is GRISTLE. There. (At this point, a section clarifying the workings of your eye: The human eye belongs to a general group of eyes found in nature called CAMERA TYPE EYES. Instead of film (or full-frame digital sensor), the human eye focuses light onto a light sensitive membrane called the RETINA (jabbing at it with a thorny twig). And here's how the human eye is put together and how it works: The cornea is a transparent structure found in the *very front* of the eye [my emphasis] that helps to focus incoming beams of light. Behind the cornea is a coloured, ring-shaped membrane called the iris (think: nebula). The iris has an adjustable circular opening called the pupil (think: sphincter), which can expand or contract depending on the amount of light beams, rays, whatever, penetrating the eye. A clear fluid called the AQUEOUS HUMOUR fills the spectacularly slim space *between* the cornea and the iris [my emphasis]. Situated behind the pupil is a colourless, transparent structure called the CRYSTALLINE LENS (think: the plastic beak of a cuttlefish or -esque). Ciliary muscles have the lens surrounded. These thuggish muscles

hold the lens in place but they also play an important, manipulative role in vision *per se*. When the muscles relax, they yank on and iron down the lens, allowing the eye to see objects (bucolic landscapes) that are far away. To see closer objects clearly (the too-close face, looming in for a drunken, booze-saturated snog), the ciliary muscle must contract, shrivel up in order to thicken the lens. The interior chamber of the eyeball is filled with a jelly-like tissue called the VITREOUS HUMOUR. This place is like a flotation tank – meditative, though not for you and your hysterical claustrophobia. A wet elevator. The surprisingly cramped belly of the massive-est whale. Anyway, after passing through the lens, light must travel through this vault and its stagnant pool of stinking vitreous humour before striking the sensitive layer of cells called the retina. The most of three tissue layers that make up the eye. These are unimaginably thin. The outermost layer, called the SCLERA, is what gives most of the eyeball its white colour – the rest of it provided by a complex system of mirrors erected to reflect the image of a scrubbed femur. The cornea is also a part of the outer layer. The middle layer between the retina and sclera is called the CHOROID. The choroid contains billions of blood vessels that supply the retina with nutrients and oxygen and also removes its waste products in an undocumented process we all find incomprehensible. Embedded in the retina are millions of light sensitive cells, which come in two varieties: RODS AND CONES (rods of uranium; paper cones for drinking water-cooler water

OUTUV that while ago). Rods are good for monochrome vision in poor light (that figure... down by the scout hut at 3 a.m), while cones are used for colour and for the detection of fine-grain detail (A Frans Lanting coffee-table photography book – loads of them – in a bargain bookshop called BOOK WAREHOUSE or similar. Adjacent: a stack of pink, branded book-cum-play kits. These a RIOT of spangling girlification). Cones are packed into a part of the retina directly behind the retina called the FOVEA. When light strikes either the rods or the cones of the retina, it's converted into an electrical signal of very low wattage that is THEN relayed to the brain via the OPTIC NERVE. The brain then translates the electrical signals into the images we, um, see. This description is a simplification and is generally only peddled in preschool textbooks. 'E' is for Eye, etc. ('C' is for cyclophosphomide, etc.)) (Polyphemus again, depicted on the following page, with a long-winded description of how he might have seen, plus a pedantic revision of his encounter with Odysseus according to diminished depth perception. The drawing of the scene is in unfixed charcoal.) [G]RISTLE gathering treacherous in your eye socket, mate. Vapour swilling into liquid, ever more viscous, until, at the opportune moment, it hardens completely – the difference between snot and dried nasal mucus, a scabrous pinnacle presented to the wandering finger, dislodged, PULLED, unexpectedly releasing a great divestment of moist, gelatinous snot; a pendulous tear, tipped with a splinter wedged under fingernail (pulling

out some vestige of yer brain: a sneeze with the EYES). This then swallowed (aided with a slug of whisky and ice water) – entering the digestive system –

PSYCHOPHARMACOLOGICAL AGENTS.

Gristle, similarly to every word uttered mute by these pages, contains – within ITS shifted, congealed state, behind the eyeballs and on – a certain amount of SOMETHING SIMILAR to dimethyltryptamine or some such. As with psilocybe or other fungal manifestations (the closest similitude), GRISTLE (for example) might be more

common, or per-

according to the

to certain cos-

alignments, etc.

this month

manifest

MONTH

upon the effect of

subsuming will

the texture of the

haps more effective,

season, according

mic

For instance,

we're in: the

effect of THIS

WE'RE IN

the words you're

directly influence

tumour. We're in*.

Those aforementioned rivulets will trace a more drunk path – will steer a more wayward path across the sensitive outer [...] of the tumour. The result will discern the metaphorical boundaries – Aztec, Houndstooth, that, um, mouth of an angler fish – these are brought to mind more readily than, say, the fluid cursive of a coin toss.

This is seasonal and should be well noted. In about half an hour you'll come up, and dependent on the height of the sun in the sky, the temperature of the earth, the humidity levels, the alignment of the planets, the amount of gamma rays suffusing the air, the contrast and brightness of the ambient light levels, the duration of the GREEN RAY as the sun DIPS (the lolling head

of a CPR dummy), the number of spawn that makes it to full-frog in the dismal pond (if you can even call it a pond) at the bottom of the play area under the shade of the diseased walnut – dependent on the alcohol content of the home brew, the result could well be horrific.

/

Feel its tentacular motion inside your florid gut!
Writhe in RAPTURES as your cells are subjected to
The Peculiar Rummaging! [...] The twisting, groping
shoots of that triffid word,
‘GRISTLE’, spreading out,
easing into your desperate open-
ings. Rimming them with its
Stratopharia Cubencil-blue
tongue; – quiv- ering, blind – a
fractal degen- erate of only a
few of the darker colours, though
each one as rich as Guatemalan
chocolate or cacao nibs, even – bitter
stimulant halved like a capsule of cyanide disguised as
a tooth (the initiation rite involved the dashing out of a
full four teeth with a tiny geological hammer wielded
by someone else’s mum, the gang whooping) and swal-
lowed as if a spot of bile: with a wince. This fractured
disappointment spreads out, a patch of time-lapse
mould in a forgotten Petri dish, and infests your entire
body and in a flash – blooming (*tired*) then receding,
until coming to rest, hardening into that clot, into that
ballbearing tumour right up in your IN. Meanwhile,
upstairs in your brain, VISIONS! (accompaniment
by Josef Van Wissem or Carl Stalling or Smegma
or Evangelista or Kim Doo Soo. Any or all of these

made unrecognizable by your tuneless hum (I strike up an accompaniment on my teeth, striking them like a marimba with my thumbnail (the temptation always to go for the William Tell overture, only as covered by Spike Jones: all belches, thigh-slaps and glottal tics).)

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Then you say, 'The only chance you get is the one you take,' and we laugh like jackals. This time, as so often, laughter leads to spasms of agony. Sorry, I say. 'But it's worth it?', an open hand on your shoulder. You're bent double before me, one hand to your chest, tears on a face I find hard to recognize, let alone console. It's exhausting, you say, later. So we go for a nap. (You nod off to begin a nightmare confrontation with the tumour, to demand, somehow, the cessation of its aggression. The tumour answers – first in rubbery squeaks, then renting sounds, a sort of lower gargling. This is the only way you can apprehend the thing: in dreams. Sprinting through the long wet grass, away from the terrible oasis of security lights and the tumourous folly and its familiar occupant – heading for a long shadow on the horizon you take to be a line of trees. The sound of your heavy breathing alongside the swishing and quiet thwap of the grass. Somewhere behind you (you do not turn to look) comes your own SCREAM, filtered through everything (Auto Filter, Auto Pan, Beat Repeat, Chorus, Compressor, Corpus, Dynamic Tube,

EQ Eight, EQ Three, Erosion, Filter Delay, Flanger, Frequency Shifter, Gate, Grain Delay, Limiter, Looper, Multiband Dynamics, Overdrive, Phaser, Ping Pong Delay, Redux, Resonators, Reverb, Saturator, Simple Delay, Spectrum Utility, Vinyl Distortion, Vocoder, Arpeggiator, Chord Note Length, Pitch, Random Scale, Velocity; AKA: Altretamine, Hexalen, Asparaginase, Elspar, Bleomycin, Blenoxane, Capecitabine, Xeloda, Carboplatin, Paraplatin, Carmustine, BCNU, BiCNU, Cladribine, Leustatin, Cisplatin, Platinol, Cyclophosphamide, Cytosan, Neosar, Cytarabine, Cytosar-U, Dacarba- zine, DTIC-Dome, Dactinomycin, ac- tinomycin D, Cos- megen, Docetax- el, Taxotere, Doxorubicin, Adriamycin, Rubex, Imati- nib, Gleevec, Doxorubicin, Liposomal, Doxil, Etopo- side, VP-16, VePesid, Fludarabine, Fludara, Fluo- rouracil, 5-FU, Adrucil, Gemcit- abine, Gemzar, Hydroxyurea, Hydrea, Idarubicin, Idamycin, Ifosfa- mide, IFEX, Irinotecan, CPT-11, Camptosar, Metho- trexate, Rheumatrex Dose Pack, Mitomycin, Mutamy- cin, Mitotane, Lysodren, Mitoxantrone, Novantrone, Paclitaxel, Taxol, Topotecan, Hycamtin, Vinblastine, Velban, Vincristine, Oncovin, Vincasar, Vincrex, Vinorelbine, Navelbine. All the gang.) You surge for- ward, stumbling, weeping, still clutching the brochure, delirious, POOR THING. Under the influence. Any autopsy ignorant of your condition would have a field day. Luckily? at the hospice, they know full well.

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Later on, in the forest.
Cool sunlight. Shin height brume. Dead trees.

You're a state.
Clothes hanging in ribbons and you're covered in
shit.

Falling to your knees, you begin to frantically fill your
cardboard trug with the various fungi poking through
the decaying forest floor (conocybe, predominant-
ly – along with a few morels, a cep and – careful – a
jade-gilled death cap) – eating the odd one.
Meanwhile, the tumour shuffling
around Sains- bury's, pushing
a demi-sized trolley, picking
up everything from the
shopping list you provided
– avocados, broccoli,
cabbage, cauli- flower, carrots,
chilli, any weird- er cruciferous
vegetables, figs, flax, garlic, grapefruit,
red seedless grapes (the convalescent's archetypal but
tokenistic foodstuff), kale, liquorice, some sad-looking
button mushrooms under cheap cling, mixed nuts,
oranges, lemons, papayas, an overpriced punnet of
raspberries, a few boxes of Jacob's Creek Syrah, a
bushel of rosemary, a bucket of bladderwrack, sam-
phire, a tight wet brick of tofu, sweet potatoes, lots of
tea (green), a few of those pupae-like cassavas, tomatoes
on the vine, turmeric, turnips. Collapsing in through
the front door, slouching towards the kitchen, a quick
glance at the clock, and it starts preparing dinner.
Chopping everything up roughly, flinging it into a
slate-coloured cast iron oval Le Creuset casserole.

Swamped in olive oil and the majority of the red wine.

The tumour devouring the lot as is, *non cuit*, then
throwing it back up and into the pot and popping it
shaky on the hob, bringing it to the boil, then turning it
to a simmer for the next forty minutes. Radio 4,
distortedly loud from a tiny Roberts radio,
the tumour sat massive and oozing under the
kitchen table, waiting. The cat seems to like IT.

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(And every one	of these words
spiralling	into feedback,
infecting to the	point of nausea
to UPCHUCK	that toxic slough
– though not	all of it – some
residue re-	mains to baste
and bolster the	tumour, which
seems to act as a	kind of magnet for
that sort of shit – the	meatier, bloodier end
of things – the ragged, in-season	behind of a put-upon
ape – a raging, throbbing red light	to illuminate every
inch of your guts, flooding it all	with that stultifying,
sordid light to connote depressed	and stricken sex,
lumpen weight, splintered taxation	– this month, here –
this month –ß the month after the	previous month that
was CERTAINLY free, clean,	demonstrably clean:
Softcore, soft focus, nubile, RIPPED.	BUFF. Picture
lens-flaring morning light (mid-morning),	Egyptian
cotton sheets, perfect, dumb specimens	of blasé human-
ity writhing happily beneath. The lexicon	of privilege,
an economy of virility, futurity, the	texture of insipid
emotional nerve endings, etc. So different	now,

WHEN everything I say is heavy with leeches of
 clotted shit, loosened with piss from the inside of your
 cheek to hang as accidents in the most inopportune
 location (public somewhere); blood or something less
 dramatic, less decorous, caking the sheets, the mattress,
 the walls, the floor – tinting the windows as if for a
 brothel or an Argento scene or both or after the crash,
 in the ditch, everything illuminated by the brake lights
 – the last, too-late dream of the Toyota, now upturned,
 leaking its passengers in meaty chunks all over the
 place. After a moment's pause, each discreet piece
 vibrating, moving, rolling up the hard
 shoulder and onto the road – speed-
 ing off to join the billions of
 other homeless swatches of dead
 bloody tissue in a fusional
 orgy – the very crucible
 within which the tumour is
 founded. That spheroid of
 terracotta clay, handled warm
 by the hands of those closest to a
 quiet, moth-wing death – indented with the inopera-
 ble, a palmistry of NO FUTURE, every life-, fate-,
 etc.-line trickling into a microscopic hole – fired in
 the kiln, glazed with a slip of machete grey, used as the
 basis for a soup. Retrieved from the bottom of your
 bowl at the end of the meal. No – retrieved from your
 throat – you're choking on it so I WHACK you on the
 back, between the shoulder blades, hard as I can, and
 that dislodges it, and you fire it out at an amazing rate
 and it smashes the window, splinters the tree, bores a
 perfect hole in an apple, tears an Ace of Spades playing
 card in two, bluntly pierces the earlobes of an entire
 youth club (all of this in super slo-mo and to the strains

of mascagni) – shattering the windscreen of the red
 Toyota Corolla, straight into the forehead of the driver,
 sending the car careering off the road, and it flips and
 flips and flips (we hope against hope it will land right-
 ways), crashing down hard on its roof with a speak-
 er-blowing CRASH. The brake lights on in the dark,
 the passengers eviscerated by the impact. The spheroid
 of clay rolling back to the residential home to accu-
 mulate another layer of clay, Slip & Fire – the meat,
 MECHANICALLY RECOVERED and patted by
 blue-plastic-gloved hands into one massive meatball to
 be eaten at the climax of the meal, by you;
 while all the rest of us are served
 Mr. Brain's Faggots on a bed
 of slowly drying mash and a
 thin wash of Bisto. Occa-
 sional glances thrown in your
 direction as you struggle
 with the task. We wash it
 down with lager; you have been
 served a tankard of Oramorph, which
 you have been instructed by the doctor you can now
 knock back with impunity, which what when you
 readily do do between great gobbets of tumour flesh.)

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(That, um, great and terrible deity, unnamed, cast as
 the gravitational antithesis to a supermassive black
 hole, a boundless protrusion that repels everything,
 is apprehended everywhere. Physically manifest
 omnipotence: What a terrible thing! Fleishy sur-
 face right there – RIGHT THERE – perpetually
 kissing up against you, breathing its hot, belched

breath into your lungs (the smell of sausage meat, coke, onions); its thick nylon eyelashes scraping upwards against your cheek, opening, blind).